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## OLD TESTAMENT WORD-STUDIES: 6. THEOCRATIC FUNCTIONARIES.

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I gather for consideration under this title a series of terms which, while they are in most instances common to the nations of antiquity, or may be said to have equivalents in every well-developed religious cultus, yet among the Hebrews were invested with strikingly technical significations. These significations arose from Israel's unique relation to Jehovah, their ever-present although invisible Protector, Leader, Lawgiver, and Ruler. This relation necessitated explicit and continuous revelations of his will, through men who were accredited as his messengers and representatives. His worship also demanded a service more or less formal, and this was administered by men especially set apart for these duties. They were the recognized mediators between the people and Jehovah. In so far as they were loyal to their commission they became vehicles and expounders of those divine truths which fundamentally distinguished the religion of Israel from the mass of surrounding heathenism, which gave life to the theocracy, stability and permanency to the community, the growing consciousness of a great and fruitful mission to the world, and therefore the capacity of extraordinary recoveries from apparently fatal shocks, and of the exhibition of fresh and expansive power in the development of those divinely appointed institutions in which the moral and spiritual life of the community attained its highest realization.

### **Rō'ēh** *seer*.

The active participle of *rā'āh* is used some twelve times as a substantive denoting one who sees, i. e. a *seer*. The first occurrence of the word in this sense is quite significant: "Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he said, Come and let us go to the seer: for he that is to-day called a prophet was formerly called a seer," 1 Sam. 9:9. The passage is interesting in that it shows the transition from one popular designation to another, as well as a substantial identity in their meaning. Both terms are freely applied to Samuel, who in the language of the people was also, like Moses, called "a man of God." He appears as the first example of a new class of men whom the exigencies of the times called into conspicuous activity. He was not merely a seer of visions, but a reformer, a forerunner of that long succession of prophets who, amidst the decay of existing institutions, took their stand firmly on the old Mosaic principles and sought to embody them in the changed life and strange conditions of the age. In this respect Samuel himself was a transition between the old line of seers who had reflected only rarely and meagerly the dazzling glory of the Mosaic age, and the new order of prophets through whom this spirit of prophecy moved as an irresistible renovating force. The use of this designation did not, however, cease with Samuel. In 2 Sam. 15:27, Zadok is termed a *rō'ēh*. Why this title is given

him, he belonging to the priestly rather than to the prophetic order, is not apparent, unless we may assume that he had been at some previous time the recipient of divine revelations. The only other *rō'ēh* mentioned by name is Hanani, who came to Asa with a distasteful message from Jehovah, 2 Chron. 7:10. Isaiah employs the term only once, and then to designate Jehovah's fearless and truthful messengers who, like Hanani, brought reproachful communications and warnings of impending calamities. "For it is a rebellious people....which say to the seers, *rō'im*, See not: and to the beholders, *hōzīm*, Behold not for us right things;....cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us," 30:9-11. In a single instance, Isa. 28:7, the word *rō'ēh* is employed in the sense of *ro'î*, that which is seen, looked at, hence prophetic vision. Depicting the terrible extent to which the vice of drunkenness prevailed in Jerusalem, Isaiah declares that even the priests and prophets, who were forbidden the use of strong drink during the discharge of their official duties, were habitually under its influence, so that they "err in vision," blasphemously mistaking the incoherent ravings of intoxication for the illumination of the Spirit of God.

***Hōzēh* seer, gazer.**

Another term used a little more frequently than *rō'ēh* and in a sense scarcely distinguishable from it is *hōzēh*. It is translated *seer* in the majority of its occurrences both in the A. V. and in the R. V. In Isa. 47:13, it designates gazers at the stars, and is associated with astrologers and monthly prognosticators; but when applied to possessors of the true prophetic spirit it seems to be entirely interchangeable with *rō'ēh*. In 2 Chron. 16:7,10, as we have seen, reference is made to "Hanani the *rō'ēh*," and in 19:2, to "Hanani the *hōzēh*." A similar identity in meaning appears in the passage quoted above from Isa. 30:9-11. The many attempts to establish a distinction in the use of these words must be abandoned as almost futile. The most that can be said is that "the verbs *rā'āh* and *hāzāh* must be distinguished to this extent, that the former denotes simply the relation of the eye to the object which it sees, the latter the dwelling of the glance on the form of an object, therefore on an image. Accordingly they are related to each other as our 'seeing' and 'beholding'" (Orelli, O. T. Proph., p. 5, n.).

David appears to have attached to himself a number of "seers," *hōzīm*. The earliest and perhaps most influential of these was Gad, who joined David while he was defending himself against Saul. Through the seer David consults Jehovah, and is encouraged to undertake an expedition against the invading Philistines, and is given positive assurance of victory over them, 1 Sam. 22:5 and 23:1-5. Heman and Jeduthun are also mentioned as David's seers, 1 Chron. 25:5; 2 Chron. 35:15. With them is associated Asaph, also a seer, 2 Chron. 29:30. The fact that they received the official title of "king's seers" indicates that they were more or less closely connected with the court at Jerusalem. Moreover, they come before us as directors in the musical services of the temple, prophesying "with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals," 1 Chron. 25:1, and "in giving thanks and praising Jehovah," 25:3. Several of this class seem to have been the official historiographers of the kingdom, 1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15.

While the writing prophets never apply to themselves the term *hōzēh* (it is applied once to Amos by Amaziah, the priest of Bethel), they use the derivative *hāzôn*, vision, as a descriptive title for their collected prophecies, Isa. 1:1;

Obad. 1; Nahum 1:1, thereby implying the supernatural origin of the communications contained in them. They were not mere intuitions, or shrewd guesses excogitated from the seer's personal observation of the political, social, and religious conditions of his time. Subjective these revelations may have been in the sense that there was no external reality impressing the sensuous organs, nevertheless the spiritual realities unfolded before the prophet's inward perception by a power other than himself were entirely objective to his own consciousness.

### **Nābhî' prophet.**

Exegetes and lexicographers have differed considerably as to the primary meaning of this word and of the verb *nābhā'* from which it is derived. Hupfeld, for instance, holds that *nābhā'* has essentially the same meaning as *nā'ālm* to hum, buzz, murmur, a signification which is applicable to any dull, half smothered tone, and hence especially to any secret, confidential communication, such as *inspiration*, i. e. a divine suggestion conceived of as whispered in the ear of the prophet or poet, who is the familiar friend of God (Die Psalmen, 36:2). The best modern scholarship rejects this analogy, and understands *nābhā'* to convey the idea of something breaking forth, rising up, presenting itself primarily to the eye, as a fountain that bubbles up, and then to the ear, as a word or declaration that forces itself into utterance. *Nābhî'* does not denote the spoken word, or one who is made to speak, as its passive form suggests, but is to be taken in an active sense as the *speaker* or proclaimer. He is one who overflows, boils over, with visions or revelations of the divine word, and these he is powerless to suppress. This is strikingly described by Amos (3:8), "The lion has roared, who can but fear? Adonai Jehovah has spoken, who can but prophesy, *yīn nābhē'*?" It is moreover illustrated in the experience of Jonah, who fled in vain from the necessity that was laid upon him. The conception lying at the root of *nābhî'* seems, then, to be that of a spokesman who does not speak his own words, but represents another whose words he proclaims. This is clear from Ex. 7:1, "I have made thee a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy *nābhî'*,"—a relation that had already been explained in Ex. 4:6, "And he shall be thy spokesman to the people: and it shall come to pass that he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God." The *nābhî'* is, accordingly, the human organ, the mouth, that articulates the thought of the spirit. The characteristic, popularly supposed to be the preeminent distinction of the prophet, viz., that he foresees and announces future events, is seen to be merely incidental to his vocation. He is not so much one who *fore-tells*, as one who *for-tells*, i. e. speaks *for* another person. Conscious of speaking for God, he is never found leaning on human authority, but always on the immediate "word of the Lord," which stands before his mind as the symbol of absolute and eternal truth. Because of the prophet's direct and intimate relation to God he becomes the embodiment and vehicle of a living revelation which exhibits in constantly clearer characters Jehovah's will and purpose.

### **Kōhēn priest.**

The prophet stands alone, unconnected, the startling product of a crisis. His activities lie in the free realm of the spirit. He has no earthly paternity, 1 Sam. 10:12, but appears in response to the creative call of God, 1 Sam. 3:4, sq., Jer. 1:5-10. The *kōhēn priest*, on the contrary, is the hereditary representative of

a revelation of faith that has crystallized into institutions. He is the symbol of established religious ordinances, of forms and ritual. He is not the medium of revelation, but its conservator and interpreter. Jehovah's will, announced by prophets and embodied in *law*, is especially committed to the *kōhēn*, who is charged with the duty of teaching it to the people, Lev. 10:11; Deut. 24:8. This distinction in function of prophet and priest is repeatedly recognized—"The law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet," Jer. 18:18; "They shall seek a vision from the prophet: but the law shall not perish from the priest," Ezek. 7:26. As the priest represents established order, so he is himself the representative of a class, a family, to whom pertain the rights of the holy office in virtue of an original divine appointment and subsequent unbroken descent, Ex. 40:12,13; Lev. 8; Num. 17; Ezra 2:62. These functions of the priesthood are plainly suggested in the designation *kōhēn*, the *kal part*. Of an unused stem *kāhăn*, the primary meaning of which is to stand upright. A *kōhēn* is a man who stands before Jehovah as his servant or minister; "the *kōh'nîm*, Jehovah's ministers, mourn," Joel 1:9; 2:17. We find, accordingly, that to them were committed the care of the sanctuary, the offering of sacrifice, and the whole work of ordinary mediatorship between Jehovah and the people.

The office of priest was sometimes combined with that of prophet, as in the case of Samuel, 1 Sam. 3:1,19-21, and of Zadok, 2 Sam. 15:27. Usually they were distinct, and not infrequently in sharp contradiction, the one being the conservator of a degenerate tradition, Jer. 1:18; Hos. 5:1, and confirmed in their corrupt practices by the divinations of false and greedy prophets with whom they were in alliance, Micah 3:11; the other, the true conservative, was a preacher of the higher principles of eternal truth, which in its new applications seemed to be revolutionary and iconoclastic.

#### *Lēvî* <sup>^</sup> *Levite*.

Closely connected with the priestly order is that of the Levites, *l'vîyyîm*, so called from their tribal descent. They were separated from the rest of Israel, sanctified, for their special services; they were given over to Jehovah in place of the first-born of every tribe who were spared when Jehovah destroyed the first-born of Egypt, Num. 3:45. In the Levitical legislation, as well as in the later historical books, the term "Levite" is a title synonymous with "priest." It occurs with great frequency in the phrase "the priests the Levites," which is equivalent to "the Levitical priests." This indicates that all the priests were Levites; but it does not follow that all the Levites were priests. The higher and preeminently sacerdotal functions pertaining to the sanctuary devolved only on the Kohathites, one of the three great families which composed the tribe of Levi. This family owed its official superiority to the fact that it included Aaron and his descendants. The tribe of Levi, as a whole, occupied the place of a mediator between Jehovah and the people, being directed to pitch their tents "round about the tabernacle of the testimony that there be no wrath upon the congregation," Num. 1:52. The greatly controverted question as to the significance of the terms "priest" and "Levite" in different periods of Israelitish history, together with the relation of these officials to each other, is too large a subject for our present consideration, even if this were the place for its presentation.

**Mēlek king.**

Recent investigations seem to show that the early Assyrian and Babylonian governments were essentially theocratic, the king being merely the representative of the invisible Deity, who was worshiped as the true sovereign of the nation (O. T. STUDENT, Jan., 1889, p. 172). However this may have been in the remoter East, it certainly held true of the monarchy in Israel. Though in the time of Samuel the external form of government underwent a change, the essential idea remained. Jehovah was still *de facto* the supreme sovereign, his human representative being simply *dei gratia rex*. Like the high-priest, he was consecrated for his office by holy oil, and was therefore called "the Lord's anointed," 1 Sam. 24:10(11). In the executive and judicial affairs of the kingdom he was a mediator between the people and Jehovah. Jehovah had accordingly three classes of representatives, viz., prophets, priests, and kings, these being respectively ministers of his word, his worship, and his authority. David is the single instance in which these three functions were combined in one person, and thus he became a type of his greater Son, King Messiah, who as a prophet is the Word of God incarnate, as a high-priest besprinkles with his own blood the mercy-seat in the heavens, and as a king rules forever from the right hand of the throne of Majesty on high.

## REPORT OF THE PRINCIPAL OF SCHOOLS OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF HEBREW (1888).

*To the Members of the American Institute of Hebrew:*

The Principal of Schools herewith submits his fourth annual report. The report will take up, first, the Correspondence School; secondly, the Summer Schools; thirdly, certain general matters relating to the work as a whole.

### I. THE CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL.

The Correspondence School has just closed its eighth year. During four of these years it has been under the direction of the American Institute of Hebrew.

#### 1. MEMBERSHIP OF THE SCHOOL.

1. The membership of the	Elementary Course	356
2. " " "	Intermediate " "	162
3. " " "	Progressive " "	86
4. " " "	Advanced " "	30
5. " " "	Cognate Courses	18
Total Membership		652

#### 2. VARIOUS STATISTICS CONCERNING THE WORK OF THE SCHOOL.

1. New members enrolled during 1888	246 ; d. 1887	201
2. Students stopping work during 1888	126 ;	139
3. Net gain during 1888	120 ;	62
4. Students graduated from one or more courses during 1888	79 ;	79
5. Various denominations represented	35 ;	32
6. States and countries, a) in United States and Canada	48 ;	51
b) in other lands	12 ;	12
7. Average age of men at work	33 ;	33
8. Number of women in the School	20 ;	20
9. Number of men not in ministry	117 ;	101